United Nations A/67/134

General Assembly

Distr.: General
10 July 2012
English
Original: Arabic/English/Spanish

Sixty-seventh session
Item 100 of the preliminary list*
Strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region

Strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region

Report of the Secretary-General

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* A/67/50.

12-41439 (E) 200712 230712

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I. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, in its resolution 66/63, commended the Mediterranean countries for their efforts in meeting common challenges through coordinated overall responses, based on a spirit of multilateral partnership, towards the general objective of turning the Mediterranean basin into an area of dialogue, exchanges and cooperation, guaranteeing peace, stability and prosperity, encouraged them to strengthen such efforts through, inter alia, a lasting multilateral and action-oriented cooperative dialogue among States of the region, and recognized the role of the United Nations in promoting regional and international peace and security.

2. The General Assembly recognized that the elimination of the economic and social disparities in levels of development and other obstacles, as well as respect and greater understanding among cultures in the Mediterranean area, would contribute to enhancing peace, security and cooperation among Mediterranean countries through the existing forums.

3. The General Assembly called upon all States of the Mediterranean region that had not yet done so to adhere to all the multilaterally negotiated legal instruments related to the field of disarmament and non-proliferation, thus creating the conditions necessary for strengthening peace and cooperation in the region. The Assembly encouraged all States of the region to favour the necessary conditions for strengthening the confidence-building measures among them by promoting genuine openness and transparency on all military matters, by participating, inter alia, in the United Nations system for the standardized reporting of military expenditures and by providing accurate data and information to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms.

4. The General Assembly encouraged the Mediterranean countries to strengthen further their cooperation in combating terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, including the possible resort by terrorists to weapons of mass destruction, taking into account the relevant resolutions of the United Nations, and in combating international crime and illicit arms transfers and illicit drug production, consumption and trafficking, which pose a serious threat to peace, security and stability in the region and therefore to the improvement of the current political, economic and social situation and which jeopardize friendly relations among States, hinder the development of international cooperation and result in the destruction of human rights, fundamental freedoms and the democratic basis of pluralistic society.

5. Furthermore, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on means to strengthen security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region. The present report is submitted in compliance with that request and on the basis of information received from Member States.

6. In this connection, a note verbale dated 14 February 2012 was sent to all Member States requesting their views on the subject. The replies received are contained in section II below. Additional replies will be issued as addenda to the present report.

II. Replies received from Governments

Lebanon

[Original: Arabic]
[26 March 2012]

Lebanon is committed to the resolutions adopted by the United Nations and cooperates in countering terrorism, international crime, arms trafficking and the illicit production and consumption of and traffic in drugs in the Mediterranean area in particular and the world in general.

Netherlands

[Original: English]
[18 June 2012]

At its sixty-sixth session, the General Assembly adopted resolution 66/63, entitled "Strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region".

The following is in response to the request of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs for the view of the Government on the issues covered by the resolution for consideration by the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session.

The Netherlands, like other European Union member States, believes that European security is closely linked to security and stability in the Mediterranean region. The Netherlands takes its responsibility bilaterally, through the European Union and through other multilateral forums by playing a role in support of the transition processes currently ongoing in various countries in the Mediterranean region.

Security and stability in the Mediterranean region also contributes to the alleviation of tensions beyond the region. The Netherlands calls on all States of the Mediterranean region that have not yet done so, to accede to all multilaterally negotiated, legally binding instruments related to disarmament and non-proliferation, in order to strengthen peace and security.

Panama

[Original: Spanish]
[8 May 2012]

In the light of the complex situation that the countries of the Mediterranean region are currently facing, compounded by the risks and opportunities presented by globalization, it is our view that cooperation is the natural and, indeed, the only way to expand relations among the various States of the region.

The many and varied conflicts that are ongoing in this region have stalled the process of integration and genuine cooperation among its various countries.

Cooperation in security is unquestionably one of the most complex and sensitive areas of cooperation, particularly on account of its political repercussions.

We recommend that the effort to draft truly effective cooperation instruments that will gradually achieve peace and security in the region should continue.

Qatar

[Original: English]
[7 May 2012]

Although the State of Qatar is not located in the geographic area defined in General Assembly resolution 66/63 and is not among the countries mentioned in the resolution, it considers that stability in the Mediterranean basin is of utmost importance in strengthening cooperation with Middle Eastern countries, the Maghreb and other Arab countries. Peace in the Mediterranean goes hand in hand with international stability. Prosperity in the Mediterranean region is the responsibility of all States.

While it reaffirms its commitment to abide by the Charter of the United Nations and the provision of international law related to cooperation among States and friendly relations, the State of Qatar strives continuously to achieve stability, peace and prosperity with the Mediterranean countries.

In reference to paragraph 7 of the aforementioned resolution, the State of Qatar took several measures in the field of combating terrorism by joining the international mechanisms on disarmament and non-proliferation, and promulgated national legislation to implement them. The State of Qatar bans the use of weapons of mass destruction on its soil, and works with the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council, Arab countries and the international community towards combating international crime and the illicit transfer of arms.

The national committee on arms embargo organizes workshops in order to raise awareness among high school and university students, as well as customs employees. These workshops are intended to inform Qatari society about the danger posed by weapons of mass destruction and have a positive effect on the development of society and in ensuring human rights and fundamental freedoms. Similarly, the State of Qatar strives to promote international cooperation, which contributes to enhancing peace and security among the countries of the region, those of the Mediterranean and the rest of the world.

Spain

[Original: Spanish]
[11 June 2012]

For historical and geographical reasons, the Mediterranean region has always been a priority for Spain in all respects. The latest National Defence Directive, No. 1/2008 of 30 December 2008, states that "the security of Spain is also tied to the security of the Mediterranean region: it is therefore crucial that the Mediterranean become an area of peace, stability and shared prosperity". The Mediterranean region therefore requires a framework for ongoing action and decision-making with regard to the development of a defence policy at this time of extraordinary intensity.

The Spanish defence policy for the Mediterranean region is in line with the general action strategy and guidelines for the current Spanish defence policy:

It complies rigorously with international law;

It is a policy with a strong multilateral focus that was developed within the framework of various initiatives and organizations with which Spain is involved: the Mediterranean Dialogue within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization; the activities carried out with the members of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe; and the Five plus Five initiative, in which Spain, together with nine other countries from both sides of the Mediterranean, participates. In all these multilateral forums, Spain has consistently demonstrated an active and highly committed policy in terms of its respective roles in the Mediterranean;

In addition to this multilateral focus, Spain supports all security and defence initiatives that facilitate dialogue and promote bilateral cooperation among countries in the Mediterranean region, especially through defence diplomacy.

This is a policy that reflects a high level of commitment, as our presence in the eastern Mediterranean testifies. In Lebanon, as part of the complex mission of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, some 1,000 Spanish troops are working for global stability in a specific area with many implications not only for the surrounding Middle East region but also for the entire world.

The Spanish defence policy seeks to build trust through cooperation, proposes lines of action and objectives for the international community and plays a role in conflict resolution. This responsibility is not shouldered solely by a single ministry but rather is carried out through a multidisciplinary approach and coordinated action by all the relevant public agencies, coupled with the combined efforts of civilian and military instruments and public and private entities.

The failure to find a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict is one of the primary causes of instability in the Mediterranean and constitutes a serious obstacle for cooperation in that region. It is therefore a priority of Spain in its activities abroad to promote a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East, on the basis of the international community's consensus on the urgent need to adopt and implement without delay the solution of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. Spain believes that such a solution must be accompanied by the forging of peace between Israel and its other Arab neighbours and of a new relationship between Israelis and the Arab and Muslim world. Working together with other members of the European Union and of the Quartet,[1] as well as the Arab States, Spain will spare no effort in striving towards that objective. It is crucial to bring about the resumption of the political process between the parties, thus helping to build mutual trust, and to avoid a crisis or anything that could reverse the progress made thus far, such as settlement expansion or further outbreaks of violence in Gaza. Spain will continue to support a solution based on international law and the mutual agreement of both parties.

However, it cannot be denied that the Mediterranean is a region of highly complex and diverse social, religious, economic and value systems; therefore, the

[1] The members of the Middle East Quartet are the Russian Federation, the United States of America, the European Union and the United Nations.

greatest challenge is finding and developing strategies that foster integration and cooperation.

There are, moreover, significant differences in perceptions, including with regard to security and defence. The establishment of a system of measures to foster trust and security among the Mediterranean countries could thus prove crucial. A system of demonstrated effectiveness, such as that which already exists within the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, could be a good starting point if adapted to the Mediterranean context.

The system could be based on a Mediterranean security map in which the geographical region of the Mediterranean would be considered an integral security area, and would include a series of measures to foster trust and security, a code of good conduct for Mediterranean countries and a mechanism for exchanging information which would allow Mediterranean countries to better coordinate their individual security agendas.

The measures to be promoted in order to foster mutual trust and thus strengthen security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region include the following:

- Increased cooperation to meet global security challenges: proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, organized crime, mass population movements and drug trafficking;
- Establishment of mechanisms for consultation and exchange of military information;
- Cooperation in establishing mechanisms for conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation;
- Promotion of the signing and ratification of international treaties and agreements on disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation, and upholding of their objectives;
- Promotion of the establishment of a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery;
- Strengthening of cooperation and integration among Mediterranean countries and furthering of their contribution to peacekeeping operations, especially those linked to the Mediterranean region;
- Reinforcement of cooperation and assistance programmes in the area of security and defence, and promotion of the exchange of military units and observers in exercises, training, visits to military units or meetings among General Staff;
- Expansion and strengthening of mechanisms for the provision of armed forces support to civilian authorities in the event of an emergency or disaster;
- Continuation of the efforts of the Five plus Five group (Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia plus France, Italy, Malta, Portugal and Spain). The Ministerial Declaration of Cagliari of 10 December 2008 marked the official launching of the Five plus Five virtual defence college established to address common security and defence issues in the 10 partner countries and to improve mutual awareness on the part of the countries on the two shores of

the Western Mediterranean, as well as to facilitate the exchange of experience and networking among the participants. The activities of the Five plus Five framework are shared among the member countries each year on a voluntary basis. In 2011, meetings were held in Paris, in March, and in Rome, in September;

Strengthening of cooperation programmes on maritime security and the control of maritime traffic;

Continuation of the international seminars on security and defence in the Mediterranean, which have been held annually in Barcelona since 2002, with a view to contributing to the political and academic debate on security and defence in the Mediterranean. In 2011, the seminar was held in Barcelona on 13 June and focused on armed forces and democratic transitions in the Mediterranean;

Promotion of activities that lead to greater transparency in defence planning and in national budget control processes;

Promotion of activities to foster democratic oversight of national defence and national security forces.

Turkey

[Original: English]
[30 May 2012]

The Mediterranean area has always been a sensitive and complex geopolitical and economic mosaic. The security environment and cooperative mechanisms in the Mediterranean have been in a state of flux since the end of the cold war. Nevertheless, the complexity of the political, economic and security environment has increased recently, necessitating a more incisive analysis of the challenges faced in the area and potential cooperative mechanisms to deal with these challenges.

Turkey believes that the Arab-Israeli conflict in general and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in particular are at the core of the problems in the Middle East. Finding a just, lasting and comprehensive solution to this conflict would be the key to the normalization of intraregional relations, opening new horizons for full regional cooperation and development in the Mediterranean basin.

The Middle East and North Africa have embarked upon a historic process of political change and transformation. This process needs to be accomplished in an orderly and peaceful manner in accordance with the legitimate demands of the peoples of the region for the establishment of an atmosphere of peace, stability and security as well as effective regional cooperation in the whole Mediterranean basin. Fundamental changes taking place in the Middle East and North Africa region in recent times have made the need for the settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict more important and urgent than ever. Thus, Turkey has continued to welcome and support all efforts for the resumption of direct negotiations for the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through a two-State solution that would lead to the establishment of an independent, sovereign and viable Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital, enabling its people to live in peace and security with the State of Israel, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the United Nations.

Turkey desires to see all countries in the region share the goals of non-proliferation and to collectively work towards a safer and more stable world. Turkey supports the establishment of an effectively verifiable zone, free of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery in the Middle East and encourages all efforts for developing a common regional understanding on this project, with the participation of all parties concerned. In this context, Turkey's support in general for the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones and more specifically for the implementation of Security Council resolution 984 (1995), regarding nuclear weapons, will continue. Turkey worked actively towards the final document of the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which includes the convening of a conference in 2012, to be attended by all States of the Middle East, on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction. We are prepared to contribute to the efforts of the facilitator for the successful convening of this event.

Turkey strongly supports international and regional cooperation against terrorism, organized crime and illicit trafficking. At the initiative of Turkey, Operation Mediterranean Shield has been conducted since 1 April 2006 in order to secure the strategic oil transportation from Ceyhan terminal in the East Mediterranean as well as to deter proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and other illegal activities associated with terrorism. Units assigned to the operation are also involved with the interrogation of trade vessels in the area of surveillance. The contacts identified within the scope of these operations are forwarded to authorities of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) as well as to those elements taking part in Operation Active Endeavour and the maritime operations of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL).

In conformity with the Maritime Traffic Regulations for the Turkish Straits and the Marmara Region, all vessels carrying weapons and ammunition intending to pass through the Turkish Straits are requested to provide "end-user certificates" in order to determine whether the shipment is legal and compatible with relevant international obligations. The same practice also applies for air transportation. As indicated in the Aeronautical Information Publication of Turkey, all cargo flights carrying dangerous goods are requested to provide "end-user certificates" in order to obtain overflight and/or landing/take-off permissions in Turkish airspace.